

Class Struggle

The Workers' Republic Women's Liberation International Socialism

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The most significant part of Gerry Adams' speech to the Sinn Féin Ard Fheis on January 28th was his call for the building of a mass 32 county anti-imperialist movement. Such a movement, Adams stated, should have as its goal the mobilisation of the majority of the "Irish people" in a fightback against the presence of British imperialism in the North and "the ruling clique in Ireland (who) uphold above all else the interests of the British and multinational capitalism in Ireland".

The IWG agree completely with Adams' sentiments. The unending and mounting repression of the Catholic minority in the North, Partition, the exploitation and social oppression of the Irish working class, Protestant and Catholic, north and south are, indeed, due to the capitalist system and the policies of both the British and Irish ruling classes. The IWG fully agree with the need to urgently build a real fightback on all fronts of struggle against the class enemy north and south—repression, unemployment, the cutbacks, low wages, attacks on trade union rights, emigration, women's oppression etc.

Two Sides of Coin

But there our agreement with Adams and the republican movement ends. For the IWG firmly believe that Sinn Féin's solutions, their idea about the nature and role of a mass anti-imperialist movement, amounts to one more cul-de-sac of nationalist illusions, utterly incapable of offering anything but rhetorical challenge to the policies of Thatcher and Charlie Haughey.

For while Adams spoke of Sinn Féin's belief that national and social oppression in Ireland are "but opposite sides of the one coin"—presumably the one coin of the class system and the capitalist reality of Ireland today—Sinn Féin's proposals, predictably, are devoid of any reference to the only class force that can actually challenge it. The IWG have, again and again, argued that this means a determined fight, however long, to focus upon and mobilise in action those who constitute the immediate, permanent and most obvious victims of the capitalist system in Ireland—the Irish working class.

To do so effectively would mean explaining the direct links between the repressive imperialist policies of Thatcher in the North against the minority and her capitalist inspired attacks on the jobs, living standards and welfare of all the working class there. It would mean explaining in the South the capitalist class basis for Fi-

anna Fáil's collaboration with imperialism over extradition and repression—the same class reality that explains their equally savage attacks upon the living standards and conditions of Irish workers and their families, the poor and the young.

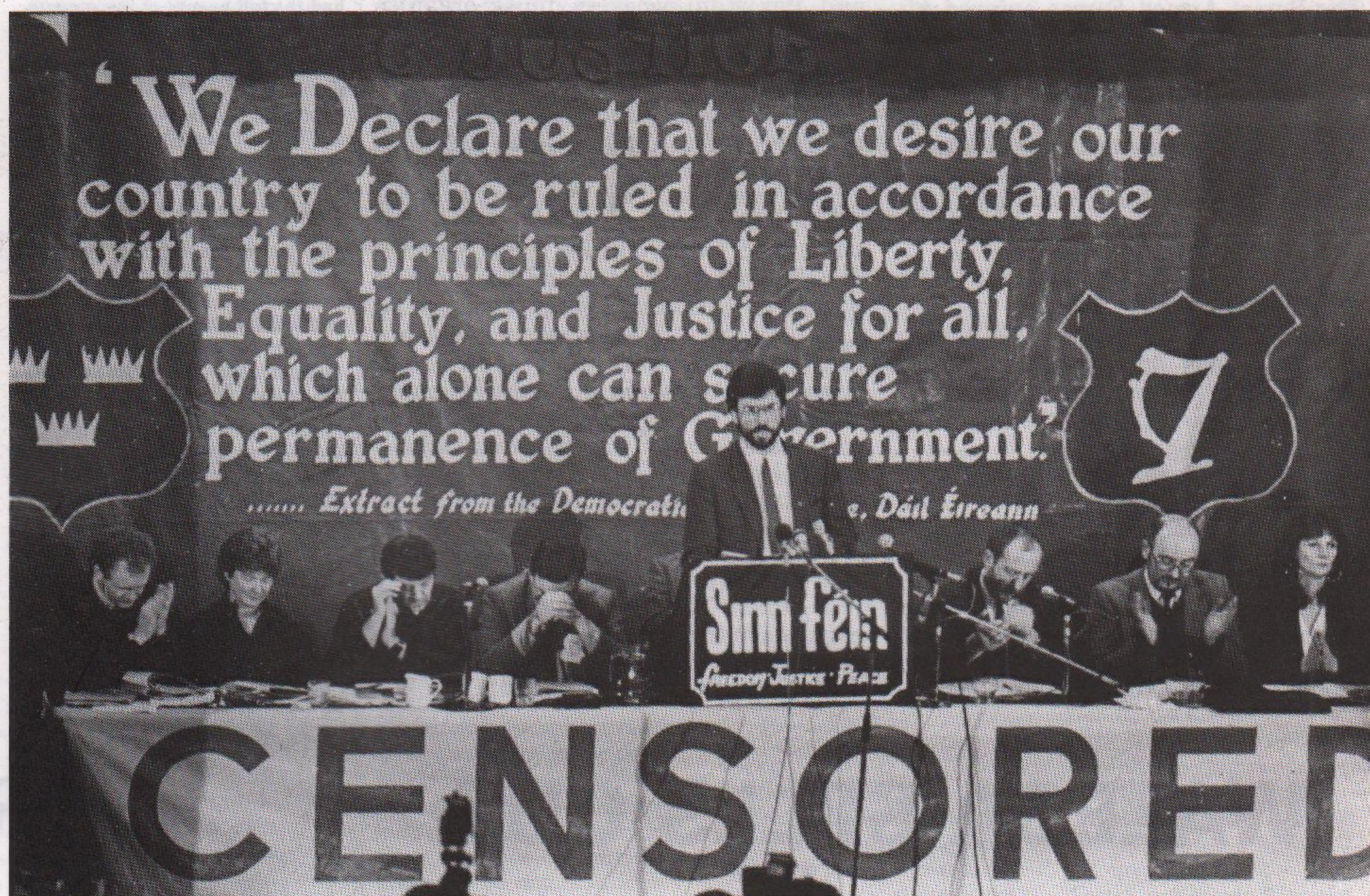
Any attempt, therefore, to build united action must start from the stark reality of class rule in Ireland. It must start from the equally stark reality that to seriously challenge the criminal policies of Thatcher and Haughey and their class we need more than rhetoric and propaganda. We must, however long it takes, place at the very centre of our perspective the fight for industrial action by the Irish working class. No other action can hit directly at the profits of the system which in all its ugly forms is so obviously their oppressor.

The republican movement, in spite of all its left rhetoric about capitalism, will have none of this. Instead Sinn Féin believe that a mass movement, embracing all of the different forms of "social, economic, cultural oppression" etc. can be built under the slogan of "national self determination", a slogan which deliberately fudges the issue of class exploitation and the priority and urgency of working class action to end it. Drawing inspiration from the bogus social radicalism of the Democratic Programme of the first Dáil, Sinn Féin believe that with these slogans a successful campaign to replace the "failed entities" of the Northern and Southern states can be built. Instead of a working class programme of struggle to unite and lead all the oppressed, Sinn Féin believe that nationalism will do the trick—just as they have believed for the past 20 years.

Nationalist Agenda

It is all too clear that the politics and methods of Sinn Féin remain strictly defined by the belief that the national oppression is the starting point for any challenge to the system north and south. It is a position which has led to setback after setback. In the North even after 20 years Sinn Féin are nowhere near winning a majority of the oppressed Catholic masses. Repeatedly they have attempted to build pan-nationalist blocs with the Catholic middle classes and Irish bourgeoisie—the tragic outcome of the hunger strike was directly the result of such a belief. The open wooing of Hume and Haughey for "nationalist unity" merely confused and demoralized those in struggle. The Anti-Extradition Campaign has been a failure precisely because of its illusion that it could split the Fianna Fáil party on the grounds of appealing to the

Adams' New Democracy or A WORKERS REPUBLIC?



"nationalist consciousness" of its grass roots. In reality such a tactic has given Haughey even more room to manoeuvre and to continue with his repression of republicans.

New Democracy

This most recent initiative announced by Adams suffers from exactly the same bankrupt perspective. It proposes to discuss how we can fight for "national rights" as an answer to the conditions of the working class as well as the oppression of the minority in the North. It defines the task as one of building a "new democracy now". Sinn Féin members and supporters may protest that they have abandoned their pan-nationalist hopes of an alliance with Hume and Haughey. They may argue that the new initiative is precisely aimed at those who are the victims of

social, economic and cultural oppression. But what defines a campaign, the IWG believes, are the political slogans, the goals and the methods of struggle it embraces.

It is crystal clear that the individuals and groups invited (no surprise that the IWG was not on the list) to a "private meeting" on the 18th February in the Clarence Hotel to discuss the basis for the new campaign have been set a political agenda strictly defined within the purely nationalist limits of republicanism. Thus one of the signatories to the letter is Kevin Boland, noted right winger and pro-capitalist. We can be certain that any attempt to make the fight for workers' action a key part of the campaign will get short shrift from Sinn Féin in order to keep the likes of Boland mouthing a few platitudes about self determination and

democracy.

Another signatory is trade union bureaucrat, Phil Flynn, General Secretary of the LGPSU and Sinn Féin member. As any Irish worker knows, Flynn was the architect of the Programme for National Recovery, the stitch-up of the trade union movement with the Fianna Fáil government. It was under cover of this bogus agreement that Haughey was given licence to launch his savage austerity measures upon the Irish working class, the old and the sick. We can be certain that whatever token trade union involvement Flynn is willing to sanction, it won't amount to encouraging strike action against Haughey's policies and his own fraudulent plan.

It is clear, despite Adams' claims, that "pan-nationalism" has not been abandoned even after Hume's re-buff. Only the form has changed.

The "conferences and political dialogue" proposed are aimed at nationalist writers, nationalist feminists, cultural activists, the clergy, civil libertarians, folk singers, community workers and, as one minor component, token trade unionists. Such an amalgam is no basis for serious opposition to either repression or exploitation. We fight instead to build:

● United fronts of workers, socialists and republicans against all concrete forms of repression

● A rank and file movement of trade unionists, mobilizing the working class communities against all aspects of the capitalist offensive, north and south, for democratic rights and against repression.

● A working class-led women's movement to fight for full equality and emancipation—including the rights of divorce and abortion. ■

EDITORIAL

KREMLIN BETRAYAL IN AFGHANISTAN

AS SOVIET troops pull out of Kabul the capitalist media is jubilant. They have labelled the retreat "Russia's Saigon" after the panic stricken US pull-out from the South Vietnamese capital in 1975. But it is a strange "Saigon" which sees the allies of the victors, US and British imperialism, also scrambling to withdraw their diplomats and press.

Such is the blood-bath being prepared for Kabul by the advancing reactionary forces of the Islamic Mojahedin that even the imperialists fear to remain behind. What lies in store for the workers, teachers, women and PDPA militia-men who cannot retreat to Moscow is not hard to imagine. Slaughter and repression at the hands of Islamic reaction has been the fate of every town captured by the Mojahedin.

While we condemn the imperialists who have armed and backed the Mojahedin the responsibility for this defeat lies squarely with the Soviet bureaucracy.

The Soviet Armed Forces entered Afghanistan in 1980 when the PDPA began to lose ground in the civil war with the counter-revolutionary forces led by the mullahs. It did so not to defend the PDPA's limited reform programme, still less to carry out an East European style social overturn, but to restore stability in its buffer state.

CONCESSIONS

Under the Soviet puppet Najibullah the land reform and women's literacy campaigns were stopped. Numerous, and ultimately fruitless, concessions to Islam were made by the regime.

Having failed to impose military stability in this way the USSR opted for a deal with imperialism and Afghan reaction. It has offered tax incentives to investors and land to the big landlords. It attempted to set up Commissions of National Reconciliation with the mullahs and the exiled king. All this has failed, faced with the intransigence of the Mojahedin's imperial-

ist backers. Now the USSR has opted to abandon the Kabul government and the progressive workers and peasants of the country to the mercy of the mullahs.

INVASION

The Irish Workers Group opposed the invasion of Afghanistan in 1980. Unlike those who "hailed the Red Army" we warned that the invasion was counter-revolutionary and would only solve the crisis of the PDPA regime on the terms of the Soviet bureaucracy. We have been proven correct. But in the war we have supported Soviet and Afghan troops against the pro-imperialist rebels. The presence of the troops did not alter the fact that in the civil war the victory of the reactionaries had to be prevented. A military united front with the Soviet troops became a necessary tactic to achieve this.

Now we call on workers everywhere to denounce the military retreat, despite the war-weariness of the Soviet troops. Soviet and Pakistani workers must organise internationalist aid, including military aid without strings, to those resisting the Mojahedin.

Afghan workers and progressive forces must fight for a constituent assembly defended by armed workers' and poor peasant militias. They must fight for the nationalisation of all land, land to those who till it, free credit for small farmers, equal rights for women and the planned industrialisation of Afghanistan.

In a country like Afghanistan such a programme can only succeed with massive international aid and a revolutionary struggle in the whole region to establish a socialist federation of south west Asia.

But the USSR is intent on proving itself a trustworthy partner in "peaceful co-existence" with imperialism all over the world. The Kremlin is prepared to betray any and every progressive struggle to prove this. The Soviet retreat and the nightmare that will result must become the impetus for a political revolutionary struggle in the USSR itself. ■

WALESA SELLS OUT

A NEW "social contract" between Solidarnosc and the Polish bureaucracy will mean a sustained attack on Polish workers' living standards. After strikes swept Poland last August, confirming that Polish workers were once again prepared to fight bureaucratic rule, General Jaruzelski decided on a new strategy of co-options.

In return for legalisation, the existing leadership of Solidarnosc is prepared to promise to stay within the law and act "responsibly" in industrial disputes. The Polish Prime Minister spelt out what the government would expect—a two year no-strike deal! Most immediately, the ruling Communist Party bosses want co-operation with a budget which will bring in social spending cuts and hold wages down while prices rise.

But the reactionary Walesa leadership of Solidarnosc is under challenge from sections of the rank and file. There was sharp criticism of the decision of the Solidarnosc executive to go along with the new pact. Inflation is running at 60%, the prices of some consumer essentials have

tripled. In January, textile workers struck for a pay rise, and for the legalisation of the union. But a legal Solidarnosc under Walesa's leadership will end up policing a Jaruzelski wage freeze!

The "official" Polish trade union, the OPZZ have taken advantage of Walesa's compromise to do a neat side-step to the left. Fearing a mass exodus from his own bureaucratic outfit, OPZZ leader Miodowicz promised to fight the budget cuts and demanded that wages should keep pace with inflation.

Polish workers have to assert their right to form their own independent trade unions—not to allow the bureaucracy to decide which strait-jacketed outfits can be tolerated. Most immediately, they need to oppose the new deal and organise rank and file resistance to wage and social benefit cuts. They must also organise against all wings of the Solidarnosc leadership who are bent on either compromise with the Stalinists or pro-capitalist, restorationist schemes to solve Poland's economic crisis. ■

CLEANERS STRIKE SOLD OUT WITH POSTAL BALLOT

The eleventh hour abandonment of the recent contract cleaners strike highlights some important new developments. The crucial issue around which the proposed strike revolved was whether or not the benefits enjoyed by full time workers should also be extended to part timers. The vast majority of cleaners, mostly women, work less than 18 hours per week and therefore don't qualify for a wide range of entitlements including maternity leave, sick pay, pensions etc. Among the other main contract workers (building, security, catering), contract cleaners have traditionally been the least regulated, the worst paid and most vulnerable group.

In 1984 a minimum wage level of £3 per hour was set for cleaners and some holiday entitlements, depending on hours worked and length of service, were agreed. Then, as now, the bosses trotted out the usual line about not being able to absorb additional costs. Since then, the response of these bleeding hearts has been to cut the hours of work (and coincidentally their own PRSI contributions) so that few cleaners have had the full benefit of the meagre improvements introduced.

Most recently, even the Labour Court, hardly a bastion of class militancy, has recommended that the cleaners be given sick pay/pension schemes, contracts of employment giving reasonable notice of redundancy and refunds towards the cost of breast cancer screening. At a meeting in Coláiste Mhuire, 500 cleaning members of the FWUI (the major union involved in the strike along with the ITGWU) voted by a five to one majority to strike after the employers rejected the Labour Court award.

That one of the most exploited sectors of the workforce were resolved to take on the bosses is no mean achievement. Typically they are recruited from amongst married women who go out to clean in order to supplement the pittance many of their husbands receive from social welfare. The very nature of their employment—temporary shift work, in small offices all over Dublin, atomises them as a group and segregates them

from the rest of the workforce. Solidarity and class consciousness are hampered by these factors.

If carried out, the strike would have involved at a minimum 1,000 workers serving the major hospitals, banks, government depts and big stores. But, as usual, the workers who wished to struggle proved more resolute than their leaders who almost immediately acted to derail their courageous fight. Just hours before the strike was due to come off, the union executive agreed to a compromise package and hastily called off the strike pending a secret postal ballot.

Apart from a phased pay increase totalling 9% over 2 years, the deal yielded a 2 month pay pause, unpaid (if you please) maternity leave, a sick pay scheme that allows a maximum payment of 20% of basic wages for a maximum of six weeks (in return for which cleaners will pay an increased contribution), employees with less than 18 hours per week and up to two years service will get one weeks notice of dismissal and those with over two years service, two weeks. The companies involved will contribute to a fund paying for cancer screening and in the meantime the bosses are to consider introducing a pension scheme!!

This is the sell-out that was heralded unashamedly by FWUI branch secretary, Janet Hughes, as "more than a draw". What kind of skewed logic and confused twaddle is this? Not even the F.W.U.I. leaders dare call this outcome a victory! This sell-out of an important struggle was sealed with the treacherous device of a postal ballot!

There was no difficulty organising a mass meeting for the benefit of the television cameras before the strike, but the idea of a democratic mass meeting to decide on the settlement terms clearly scared arch-bureaucrat Attley and his cronies. Isolated in individual homes, unable to debate out the issues, bombarded by the bourgeois media, confused and uncertain, is it any wonder that the workers voted for acceptance?



PHOTO: DEREK SPEIRS/REPORT

What was needed was to fuse the anger and action of those who were standing in the front line. That would have meant linking the struggle directly through delegations, mass picketing and a united campaign with other trade unionists by taking the issues directly to their workplaces. However, such an argument, if put, would have met with bitter hostility from the union leaders. Avoiding a fight at all costs, what really bothered the union bureaucrats was the possibility that, should the hospitals etc. have engaged non-union labour, they would have been under pressure by the workers to argue for ICTU authorisation for "all out pickets". And so, with their tails between their legs, they swallowed a compromise package because as bad as this might be, they knew that the alternative of concerted working class action could prove to be worse—for their cosy collaboration with Irish capitalism.

Militants throughout the unions must fight every attempt to replace rank and file democracy with postal ballots or any other form of ballot which replaces the democratic mass meeting. It is no accident that this favourite device of Mrs Thatcher in her offensive against the unions in Britain and the Six counties is now being pioneered in the south by Wm Attley. The new 'super-union' he is about to create with the ITGWU would make such methods the order of the day. ■

Reinstate John Mitchell

John Mitchell was dismissed as general secretary of IDATU ultimately because his militant methods, which brought wage rises above the average to shop workers and others, were intolerable to the right-wing hacks who dominate the Union's executive. As argued in the last Class Struggle, we openly take the side of John Mitchell against the action of the IDATU executive and support the campaign to re-instate him which has the support of many of the most combative shop stewards in that union.

We give that support without at the same time hiding any of our criticisms of unelected union officials who do not fight for complete rank and file democracy in the unions.

At the Dublin public meeting of the campaign on 24th Jan, the IWG argued that the announcement of the new SIPTU makes it all the more urgent to build a campaign for a national rank and file movement in the trade unions and for rank and file democratic control of all the unions. John Mitchell

expressed general agreement, correctly adding that such a campaign must also fight for independence of the the trade unions.

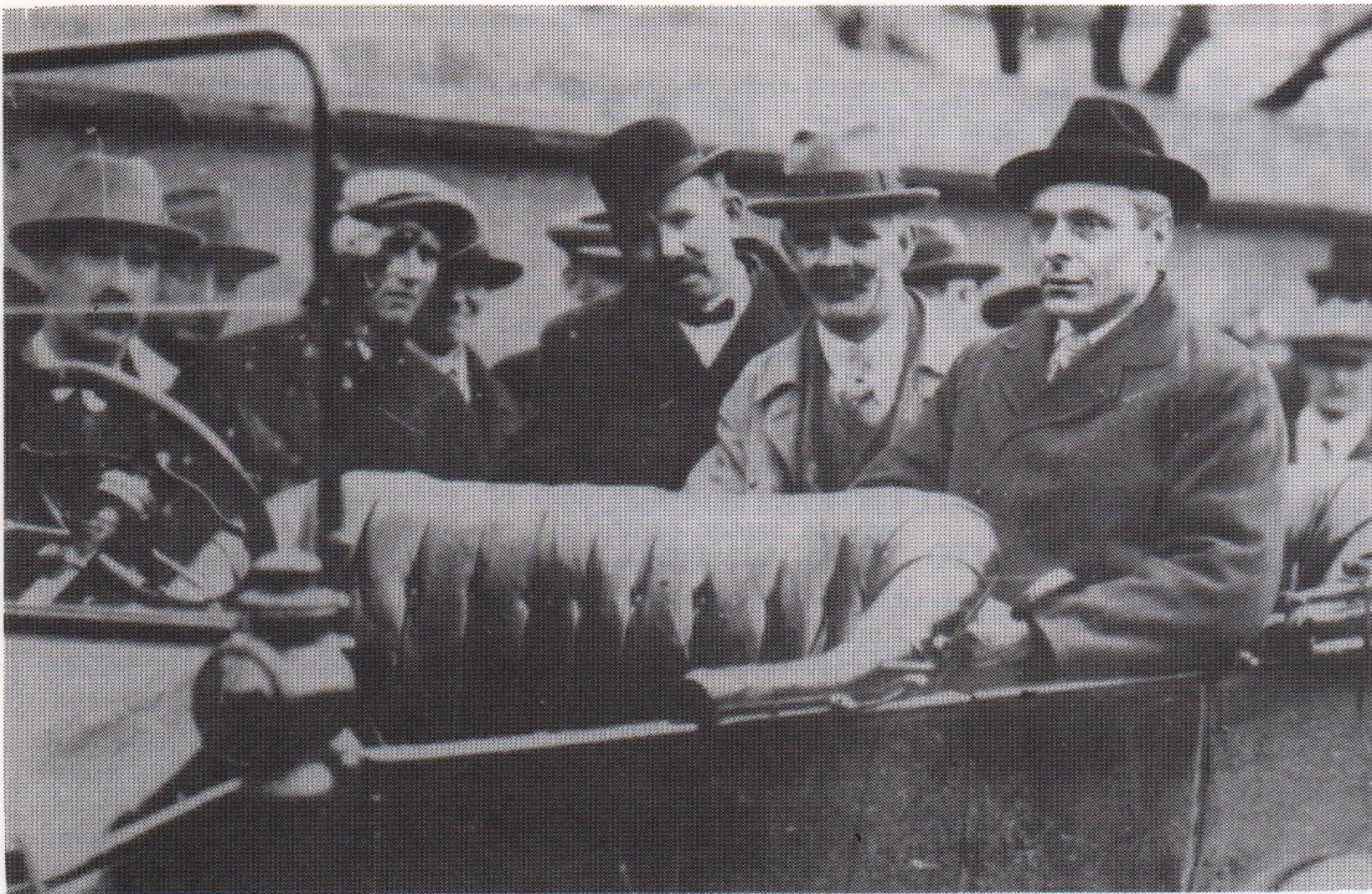
We call on all militants and shop stewards to urgently raise resolutions demanding Mitchell's re-instatement. Send them to the IDATU executive and the campaign. Send donations to the campaign at 380 Nutgrove Avenue, Dublin 14. To give assistance to the campaign, telephone Dublin 935629, Cork 961947, Derry 269049, Belfast 246044. ■

Your solidarity needed

JOSE Ramon Garcia Gomez, a leader of the Mexican Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT—Mexican section of the USFI) was kidnapped on 16 December 1988. He was a former PRT candidate for mayor of the town of Cuautla and organiser of the Peoples' Defence Committees created after Salinas' presidential victory.

On the day he disappeared undercover police had his house under surveillance. This is just one of a series of illegal detentions by the police aimed at smashing opposition to Salinas. There are an estimated 800 "disappeared" in Mexico. Mass rallies and hunger strikes have been held to call for José Ramon's immediate release.

Workers' organisations in Ireland should send telegrams immediately to the Mexican Embassy, Halkin St. London SW1 and to: Carlos Salinas de Gortari, Presidente Constitucional, Estados Unidos Mexicanos, Palacio Nacional, Mexico DF, Mexico.



▲ Thomas Johnson (right) at Mountjoy jail during April 1920 hunger strike with (left) J.H. Thomas, the infamous union leader who sold out the 1926 General Strike in Britain.

for "recreation and invigoration of our industries and to ensure their being developed on the most beneficial and progressive co-operative industrial lines". Finally, the claim that "Foreign trade was to be controlled" is not substantiated. What the text said was

...trade with foreign Nations shall be revived on terms of mutual advantage and goodwill, and while undertaking the organisation of the Nation's trade, import and export, it shall be the duty of the Republic to prevent the shipment from Ireland of food and other necessities until the wants of the Irish people are fully satisfied and the future provided for.

This vague formula is entirely compatible with the everyday measures of the capitalist governments of modern Ireland, designed to "organise" foreign trade via a whole range of state agencies! It has nothing to do with socialism. The peculiar formulation about the *wants of the Irish people* is a rhetorical exorcism of the memory of the Great Hunger of the 1840s when laissez-faire capitalism combined with semi-feudal agriculture in Ireland. This left the peasantry dependent for food on their blighted plots while the crops farmed for the landlord were exported. As a commitment in 1918 to prevent hunger in 20th Century Ireland it was meaningless! A single definite proposal on wage rises and reduced hours would have done infinitely more to feed the under-nourished slum-dwellers of 1919.

Mass Strikes

Against all this rhetoric we must measure the record of its authors. The action of the working class in 1919 ranged from mass strikes for wage rises to a short-lived Soviet in Limerick and a general strike in Belfast for the 44-hour week. Not only did Sinn Féin and the First Dáil not encourage such struggles in general against the capitalist backers of their own immediate political rivals, but by ignoring the united struggle of the protestant and catholic proletariat in Belfast against the Unionist bosses, SF squandered important chances for securing even the unity of the nation itself against the gathering pro-imperialist reaction.

In their deliberate falsification of the 1919 Democratic Programme, today's "left" Republicans are caught in endless contradictions. They of-

fer us 1919 as proof that Republicanism can champion the cause of the exploited masses—for socialism. Yet they have to admit that the radical Sinn Féin movement of that period *betrayed* this so-called socialist programme. The explanation...

Their most articulate leaders had been shot in the Rising. Those who now took control of the national movement had no commitment to radical social change. For de Valera, the Democratic Programme was irrelevant while others, like Collins, actively opposed it behind the scenes. Without radical trade union opposition, their opinions held sway.

Bankrupt Rhetoric

On the one hand they point to the Democratic Programme as the socialist credentials of Republicanism, while on the other they admit that its authors had no time for it. Finally they acknowledge that the "programme" could not become a reality unless the organised working class struggled to force Sinn Féin to implement it! That's as complete an admission of political bankruptcy as the Irish working class can ever expect from "socialist Republicanism".

Certainly, only the independent struggles of the working class could have had any meaning in hammering out and fighting for a genuine programme of transition to socialism. Labour's deference to Republican leadership and the democratic programme proved disastrous for the working class and the national struggle. Indeed the national struggle itself could not be completed without a revolutionary working class at its head, challenging capitalism in the process. In the revolutionary democratic struggle the United Front against imperialism was a necessary tactic for the working class movement, but such unity could only be for the common aim of smashing imperialist rule. In the fight for their own class interests, for the smashing of capitalism, the republican movement either had to be firmly brought under the hegemony of a proletarian movement or treated as a class enemy aiding the bourgeoisie to reconstruct its rule.

Those alternatives were not unique to the Irish working class. The Nicaraguan revolution posed the same challenge, and the outcome, tragically is that the Sandinistas never broke with capitalism, never engaged in class struggle

against it, with increasingly tragic results for even the democratic revolution against imperialism. There too, petit bourgeois socialist demagoguery and rhetoric played their deceitful role.

The possibility, however, of Irish republicanism in the future leading any such deepgoing movement of the masses as in Nicaragua is extremely remote even in the most profound crisis. All the more pathetic, therefore, that their new turn in desperation for support in the southern working class should start out from the bankrupt fraud of the 1919 "Democratic Programme" instead of building united fronts of action for concrete demands that can genuinely advance the interests of the workers and oppressed.

Though many in the Republican movement have proved again and again their *revolutionary* mettle as against imperialism, the entire conception of "socialism" held by the Sinn Féin of Gerry Adams is as deeply *reformist* and class-collaborationist as that of the Irish or British Labour Parties.

The Permanent Revolution

Once again, the Communist Manifesto clarifies the tasks of genuinely revolutionary socialists:

In short, the Communists everywhere support every revolutionary movement against the existing social and political order of things. In all these movements they bring to the front, as the leading question in each, the property question, no matter what its degree of development at the time. (Conclusion to the Communist Manifesto, 1848)

Two years later, based on actual experience of struggle for the democratic revolution Marx concluded:—

[The working class] themselves must contribute most to their final victory, by informing themselves of their own class interests, by taking up their independent political position as soon as possible, by not allowing themselves to be misled by the democratic phrase of the democratic petit bourgeoisie into doubting for one minute the necessity of an independently organised party of the proletariat. Their battle cry must be: The Permanent Revolution. (Marx—Address to the Communist League, 1850). ■

THE IRISH WORKERS GROUP is a revolutionary communist organisation. We base our programme and policies on the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, on the documents of the first four congresses of the Third (Communist) International and on the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International.

■ Revolution

Capitalism is an anarchic and crisis-ridden economic system based on production for profit. We are for its replacement by socialist production planned for human need. Only the working class can lead the oppressed masses of the planet towards this goal. To do so requires a social revolution that expropriates the capitalist class and smashes the armed power of that class, namely its state, replacing it with the dictatorship of the proletariat, founded upon workers councils and armed militias of the workers.

■ Reformists

There is no peaceful parliamentary road to socialism. Workers are repeatedly held back from the struggle for power by the social democratic or Labour parties, the trade union bureaucracy and the Stalinist parties. These bodies, while based on workers organisations, are bourgeois in their politics and practice. Their strategy of alliances with the bourgeoisie (popular fronts) inflicts enormous defeats on the working class worldwide. Their history is one of sacrificing the historic aims of the proletariat to reforms within capitalism. In periods of crisis, however, capitalism tries to recoup these concessions.

■ Transitional Programme

If the working class is to successfully fight the capitalist offensive, its own crisis of leadership must be resolved in a revolutionary direction. To this end we fight within the workers' movements to link existing struggles to the struggle for working class power. We fight for factory committees, industrial unions, international combine committees, unemployed organizations and councils of action—forms of organisation that can bring the workers united into conflict not only with individual capitalists but with the capitalist system. Through transitional demands the masses can find a bridge between their present struggles for everyday demands and the tasks of the socialist revolution.

■ Trade Unions

In the trade unions we fight for a rank and file movement to oust the reformist bureaucracy, to democratise the unions and win them to a revolutionary action programme based on transitional demands. Central to this is the fight for workers' control of production.

■ Stalinist States

The so-called 'communist' countries are in fact *degenerate workers states* ruled by

WHERE WE STAND

throughout the island. We fight for maximum unity in the struggle against capitalism with the Protestant working class, while not hiding from them our fundamental opposition to British imperialism.

■ Church & State

We fight for the most complete separation of Church and state, an end to church control of schools, hospitals and other social institutions. We fight against every confessional or sectarian expression in the workers' organisations.

■ Sexual Oppression

We fight against the oppression that capitalist society inflicts on people because of their race, age, sex, or sexual orientation; or on minorities such as the Travellers. We are for the liberation of women and for the building of a working class women's movement, not an "all class" autonomous movement. We are for the liberation of lesbians and gays from their special oppression.

■ Environment

We fight for the working-class action to keep the environment safe for human life against its destruction by the profit lust of capitalism or by bureaucratic Stalinist planning.

■ Internationalism

It is impossible to achieve socialism within a single national territory. The revolution must become international—its fundamental task is its own extension. Therefore, as well as building revolutionary parties, the workers need a revolutionary International. The last, the Fourth, collapsed into centrism between 1948 and 1951 after it failed to re-elaborate Trotsky's programme for the new world period.

■ New International

The Irish Workers Group is the Irish section of the *Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International*. We are pledged to fight the *centrism* of the degenerate fragments of the Fourth International (Militant, LWR, PD, SWM etc. in Ireland) and to refound a Leninist Trotskyist International through a process of revolutionary regroupment. We combine the struggle for a re-elaborated transitional programme with active involvement in the struggles of the working class—fighting for revolutionary leadership.

■ Join the IWG

If you are a class conscious fighter against capitalism and imperialism and if you are an internationalist—join us!

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On the 10th anniversary of the Revolution

New Slaughter of Left in Iran

THIS MONTH marks the tenth anniversary of the Iranian revolution. In 1979 the Shah of Iran—an imperialist backed dictator—was overthrown as a result of a massive general strike, street demonstrations of over a million people and a spontaneous armed insurrection.

The revolution dealt a real blow to imperialist control of the Gulf. It raised the hopes of the Iranian masses that their democratic aspirations could be fulfilled and their exploitation by imperialism ended. The Islamic leadership of the mass movement, personified by Khomeini, rapidly betrayed those hopes.

In successive stages a bloody counter-revolution, under the auspices of the Islamic Republic, crushed the workers' organisations, repressed the national movements, particularly the Kurds, and decimated the left. In the period from June 1981 through to 1982 some 20,000 political prisoners, mainly of the left and of the popular Islamic Mojahedin, were executed as clerical reaction tightened its grip and enforced brutal Islamic law on every sector of Iranian society.

RALLYING

At the same time the regime warded off internal crisis by rallying the masses behind the war effort against Iraq. The war, which began in 1980 as a legitimate defence of the remaining gains of the revolution against an imperialist backed invasion, was transformed into a reactionary holy war by the mullahs.

After Iraq had been driven from Iranian territory the mullahs kept the slaughter going in order to deflect the masses' attention from the growing economic crisis that was engulfing Iran.

Towards the end of the war, developing mass discontent and imperialist pressure led a faction of the Iranian ruling class—led by Rafsanjani, the Speaker in the Majlis (parliament) and head of the armed forces—to settle the conflict.

They wanted to prepare for the re-integration of capitalist Iran into western imperialism's sphere of exploitation. The war had achieved nothing, except the continued survival of the Iranian regime. It left over one million Iranians dead. Their sacrifice is now commemorated by a fountain that spurts artificial blood in Tehran's major cemetery.

But Rafsanjani is unable to chart a smooth course to the establishment of a stable, pro-imperialist regime. Since Iran accepted the UN's ceasefire proposals in the autumn, the

internal political crisis has sharpened dramatically. The clearest evidence of this is the wave of executions implemented by the regime and authorised by Rafsanjani.

BRUTALITY

With characteristic brutality, between three and five thousand political prisoners have been executed in the past four months. In one case hundreds died when the regime's revolutionary guards deliberately caused an explosion in Tehran's Bastille, the notorious Evin prison.

The objective of the regime was to slaughter its opponents in advance of the promised amnesty for prisoners to mark the revolution's tenth anniversary. Far from being an example of indiscriminate slaughter—as sections of the western press portray it—the present repression has very clear political aims. Iran is confronted with a profound economic and political crisis that threatens to develop into a new revolutionary situation.

The economy was devastated by the war. While oil production was maintained to service the war effort, it was geared wholly to the export market. Industry is running at a mere 30% of its capacity. Daily price rises are the norm. Rations allow one and a half pounds of meat per family per month. Needless to say, the black market is booming.

BLACKOUTS

In the major cities electricity blackouts are a regular occurrence, having doubled in frequency since the summer. And, despite Iran's massive oil industry, the country is obliged to import all of its oil-based products.

To deal with this crisis the Rafsanjani wing of the bourgeoisie—Rafsanjani himself is a millionaire landowner and property speculator—has a clear capitalist project of reconstruction. Rafsanjani has

argued that the regime has got to:

“... give up some of the short-sightedness, some of our excesses and some of the crude aspects... of the early stages of the revolution”.

In practice this means handing imperialism lucrative contracts for reconstruction projects, allowing unrestricted foreign investment and backing Iran's growing band of private sector capitalists to the hilt. A clear sign of the times is that import restrictions have been lifted on twenty types of products. Economic neo-liberalism is finding favour with many of Iran's clerics.

The problem for Rafsanjani, however, is that his pro-imperialist policies are being opposed from within the ruling class and its clerical representatives. The so-called radicals around the Prime Minister, Hussein Moussavi, and Khomeini's designated heir, the Ayatollah Montazeri, are bitterly hostile to Rafsanjani's “pragmatist” faction. This conflict has provoked the present round of executions.

The “radicals” favour a state-capitalist solution to Iran's crisis. They preach Islamic self-reliance, argue for the extension of nationalised industry and countenance trading links with the degenerate workers' states.

They have demagogically championed the poor and concentrated particularly on the plight of demobilised soldiers. Montazeri himself has tried to become a figurehead for the opposition to the present wave of executions. In an open letter to the nation he wrote:

“I declare my opposition to these sentences, and I am sure there are a good number of people in this country who would share this with me.”

Montazeri—now effectively under house arrest—and the “radicals” fear that once Khomeini is dead Rafsanjani will launch a power struggle and smash all opposition. It is fear of this prospect that has prompted a man who wholly endorsed the butchery of 1981-82, to oppose the executions.

While some of the executions have been directed against the “radicals”—including a relative of Montazeri—the main target has been the left and the Mojahedin. In particular the Stalinists of the Tudeh Party and the Fedayeen (majority) have suffered heavy losses. Some 700 Tudeh Party members have been killed so far.

The motivation for this wholesale destruction of the

left is clear. Rafsanjani fears that after the death of Khomeini an alliance of the Stalinists and the “radicals”—capable of mobilising working class support—could prove a serious obstacle to his programme of imperialist financed, capitalist reconstruction. The executions are designed to smash the political organisations that could serve as the backbone of such an alliance.

We totally condemn the present round of executions and call for international working class action in defence of the leftists being murdered. However, it has to be said, the Tudeh Party and the Fedayeen (majority) have, through their Stalinist policies, paved the way to their own destruction.

MURDEROUS

In 1981-82 they hailed Khomeini's regime as an “anti-imperialist government” gave full backing to its murderous campaign against the Mojahedin and Fedayeen (minority).

They actually assisted the regime in its repression, informing on its rival leftists and sending them—inside and outside Iran—to their deaths. Our defence of the Stalinists against repression in no way blinds us to their crimes.

In the present crisis and in the struggles ahead the Iranian masses need to be broken entirely from their illusions in the Stalinists and the “radicals” within the clergy. Ten years after the February insurrection a new revolution is needed.

The lessons of 1979 and since must be learnt. The Iranian revolution does not need—indeed it cannot have—a purely democratic stage. This stageism, advocated by the Stalinists and most of the “left” Stalinists, like the Fedayeen (minority), is a noose around the neck of the proletariat.

The working class needs to rebuild organisations like the shoras (councils) that flowered during the 1979 revolution. It needs to develop them into organisations for working class power, into soviets, led by a revolutionary Trotskyist party.

Only with the triumph of workers' power in Iran can the hopes raised by the last revolution be fulfilled. Any other strategy will lead to more repression, bloodshed and exploitation at the hands of domestic and imperialist capital, whichever Islamic faction wins the power struggle after Khomeini's death. ■



▲ Under the eye of Khomeini—Hashemi Rafsanjani, Speaker in the Majlis (Iranian parliament)

Fighting Fascism in France

THE FASCISTS are still very active in France. The wave of brutal racist attacks—mainly by skinheads—is growing. During November and December last year the National Front (FN) organised two demonstrations in Paris, the first in favour of the death penalty and the second against the wave of public sector strikes that were taking place.

Although the French section of the USFI has recently congratulated itself on its supposed fight for mass mobilisations against the FN, (International Viewpoint 23.1.89) the truth is somewhat

different. The whole of the French left has been silent on the issue for the last six months. To meet the threat of skinhead attacks, and to warn workers and youth about the danger represented by the FN, members of Pouvoir Ouvrier (PO) in St Brieuc (Brittany) have organised an anti-fascist committee. Together with a dozen or so local anti-fascist youth PO produced 1,500 copies of a leaflet which was given out at local schools.

Building on work done by PO in 1985 when a FN meeting was stopped, our comrades organised a fifty strong meeting on 20 January. The meeting formally launched the anti-fascist committee and set itself the task of spreading its roots into the local labour movement and organising to stop the fascists. This is an example for the French left to follow. ■



MRCI
NEWS
Movement for a
Revolutionary
Communist
International

Austrian Left in Crisis

WHOLE SECTIONS of the Austrian left are in crisis. In particular the Austrian section of the USFI, SOAL, is facing disintegration. More and more the organisation has been dissolving itself into the Green

Party. But against the policy of liquidation an opposition to the SOAL leadership emerged last summer.

From the very beginning of the opposition's life Arbeiter-

standpunkt, the Austrian section of the MRCI, tried to convince the comrades that the dissolution into the Greens flowed from the whole centrist politics of the USFI itself. A complete break from this centrism was necessary if the opposition was to develop in a revolutionary direction.

At the time of the conference in December, the opposition itself split into two wings. One section, echoing the “proletarianisation” policies of the SWP(US), believed that a turn to the working class, in and of itself, was the way forward. Of course a turn to the working class is vital, but separated from the question of programme it is not an alternative to the bankruptcy of the USFI. The SWP(US) is living proof of this, having renounced Trotskyism and courted Castro for

years now. Without a complete political break from centrism the danger is that the comrades will simply become isolated and demoralised if they get into the factories.

The other wing of the opposition understood this problem more clearly and took up the arguments of our organisation. At the conference itself, however, the majority favoured the orientation to the Greens. With many of the members left as passive observers of the debate by the SOAL leadership the likelihood is that both wings of the opposition will soon find it pointless to remain inside the USFI. In that event we will redouble our efforts to win as many comrades as possible to the Austrian section of the MRCI and we are confident that we will strengthen our ranks as a result. ■

SINCE ASSUMING power in the Soviet Union a major feature in Mikhail Gorbachev's struggle for Perestroika has been how far he has gone in exposing the crimes of Stalin's dictatorship. Whereas the criticism of Stalin made by Nikita Krushchev at the 20th Congress of the CPSU in 1956 was never allowed to reach the ears of the Soviet masses, Gorbachev has deliberately opened the floodgates of criticism and investigation into the whole period of Stalinist rule.

As a result, the people of the USSR have now had official confirmation that yesterday's "Uncle Joe" was in reality directly responsible for a regime which murdered millions and incarcerated many more in its camps. They now know also that the show trials in which many of the leading members of the Bolshevik Party from the days of Lenin were convicted of charges of collaboration with the Nazis, were rigged by Stalin and his henchmen.

The impact of Gorbachev's measures have been dramatic. From all sections of Soviet society there have been calls for the fullest inquiry into each and every individual case of the Bolshevik leaders who fell victim to the purges. Already Nikolai Bukharin, long-time companion of Lenin, shot in the '30s, has been officially cleared.

Trotsky's Legacy

But Gorbachev's tactic of using the methods of a "cultural revolution" to mobilise public opinion behind him against his opponents in the Soviet bureaucracy, carries serious dangers for him and his fellow bureaucrats. For in so openly acknowledging the full extent of Stalin's crimes, in so clearly spelling out the consequences for Soviet society of Stalin's monstrous dictatorship, Gorbachev inevitably has had to confront the legacy of Trotsky—his politics and his fate at the hands of Stalin.

For was it not with Trotsky that Lenin, in the last year of his life concluded the first agreement among a section of the Bolshevik leadership for a common fight against the growing Stalin-led bureaucracy in the party? After Lenin's death, was it not Trotsky, along with the Left Opposition of 45 leading members of the party, who put forward a programme to replace the "New Economic Policy" (NEP) with planned industrialisation and to restore open democratic life to the Party and the soviets throughout the country? And was it not Trotsky and his supporters who first fell victim to the foul slanders of the Stalin lie-machine, branded as "enemies of Leninism", hounded out of the party, thrown in their thousands into the camps, exiled or murdered?

Reaction against Lenin

On the basis of these experiences, the struggle of the Left Opposition of 1923 and the United Opposition 1925-26, Trotsky first subjected the growing Stalin-led bureaucracy to scientific Marxist scrutiny. He explained its material roots in the unique condi-

Old and New Lies About Trotsky

Rehabilitation of Stalin's victims is under way in the USSR, with one major exception—Trotsky. For Lenin's important co-leader of the Russian revolution and founder of the Red Army 're-vilification' is the order of the day. Not just in the USSR either as the recent journal of the Workers Party makes clear. Why does the Kremlin still so fear Trotsky that it has embarked upon a campaign of slander against him?

tions of an infant workers' state, with a relatively small proletariat and a large mass peasant population, battered by civil war and Imperialist intervention. These events had taken their toll in the destruction of tens of thousands of the most experienced working class fighters for the revolution. From these conditions, he argued, there emerged within the party and its organs throughout the country a distinct caste of functionaries whose social interests became increasingly antagonistic to the fundamental principles of the Leninist programme—the deepening and expansion of the democratic control of the masses over all aspects of social life as the condition for socialism at home, and the spread of the revolution abroad.

Thus Stalin's adoption in 1926 of "socialism in one country" as the new political basis for the Communist International underlined for Trotsky the abandonment of the class struggle and of internationalism as the banner under which the world Communist movement would pursue its struggle against international capitalism.

While in the thick of the battle against Stalinism in the USSR until 1929, and afterwards in exile, Trotsky continued to explain the zig-zags of Stalin's policies at home and abroad. By continuing the NEP, against the Left Opposition, and in alliance with the Right Opposition led by Bukharin, Stalin strengthened the wealthy peasant Kulaks and capitalist market forces. Then, when the Kulak revolt began to threaten the foundations of the workers' state itself in 1928, Stalin abruptly abandoned NEP, brutally wiped out the Right Opposition and turned to the policy of forced industrialization and collectivisation. Coinciding with these policies at home he forged an alliance with the British TUC bureaucrats in 1926, ordering the British CP and the half-million strong Minority Movement—the communist rank and file movement in existence since 1922—to hand over control of the General Strike to the treacherous union leaders.

After 1928 Stalin abruptly abandoned his unprincipled collaboration with the social-democratic and trade union leaders of the West in pursuit of a policy of ultra-left dismissal of the mass trade un-

ions and parties of social democracy. Describing them as "social fascists" more deadly than Mussolini or Hitler, he blindly rejected any need for the divided workers' movement of Europe to unite against the growing fascist threat. For Trotsky the full counter-revolutionary nature of Stalinism was fully revealed in 1933 when Hitler came to power in Germany on the broken back of a divided workers' movement which, united, could have swept both Hitler and German capitalism off the face of the earth.

The fact that throughout the Comintern worldwide no opposition existed to Stalin's criminal policies signalled that complete political power now rested in the hands of the Stalin-led bureaucracy. The world Communist movement was dead for revolution.

▼ **Stalinist propaganda accuses Trotsky of conspiring with the Nazis to overthrow the USSR.**



Again and again throughout all of these events Trotsky pointed out the horrific reality of Stalinism, its mass murders, torture chambers, and its camps. Meanwhile, the Communist Parties of the west organized trips of liberal fellow-travellers only too eager to sing their sycophantic praises of Stalin's "great socialist experiment". But as more of Stalin's past is admitted the shadow of Trotsky looms menacingly over Gorbachev and his cronies not

merely because of the accuracy and clarity of his analysis, the power of his insights and the precision of his predictions. The spectre which increasingly haunts Gorbachev is much more concrete—the practical political conclusions that Trotsky drew from his analysis of the events in Germany. The only way back, he argued, to a healthy workers' state in the hands of the working class, the only way forward for the world's proletarian struggle, was now a revolution in the Soviet Union—a political revolution. This could only mean the complete destruction of the bureaucracy and its parasitic grip on the economic and political life of the working masses.

Only this could re-invigorate the soviets, factory cells and the party. Only in this



It was these conclusions, this programme, that struck fear in the heart of Stalin and which still points like a dagger to the heart of the Soviet bureaucracy today. It is for these reasons, therefore, that the bureaucracy, side by side with its unmasking of the myths about "Uncle Joe", and even in the very act of recovering Trotsky from the oblivion of Stalinist history, are once more subjecting his legacy and politics to suppression and distortion.

The Stalin personality

A recent vivid example has appeared, predictably, in the pages of the Workers' Party journal *Making Sense* No. 5, Dec '88. Dimitri Volkogonov's article, "The Stalin Phenomenon" first appeared in *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, weekly organ of the Board of the USSR Union of Writers (in Stalin's days the centre for the most fawning apologists for the Dictator among the intelligentsia). Volkogonov's "explanation" of Stalin comes down to the following:

People with unlimited power who are beyond democratic control inevitably develop a sense of infallibility. They come to believe they have a license to do anything and tend to overestimate their personal abilities ... As a rule such people, although they live amongst others, are infinitely lonely (p.18)

In essence this explanation is no more than the vulgar bourgeois dictum of Lord Acton—*power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely*. Beyond that there is nothing in the analysis relating Stalin's emerging prominence from relative obscurity within the Party to Dictator to the material conditions surrounding the early Workers' State's battle for survival. It was this which constituted the soil out of which crystallized the Stalin personality.

But significantly, Volkogonov, while ignoring all of the material context which gave rise to the struggle within the Party for the life of the revolution, is absolutely clear and certain about the correctness of Stalin's actions and methods in defending the revolution in the 1920s:

To be honest before truth and history one cannot but acknowledge Stalin's contribution to the struggle for socialism and its defence ... Stalin and the Party nucleus that defended Leninism in an ideological and political struggle paved the way for the construction of socialism—and then when it seemed that the worst was over... there emerged a profoundly erroneous concept sanctified by Stalin... as socialism moved forward the class struggle would intensify (p.15)

So, in spite of all the empty speculations about the source of Stalin's irrationality, everything he did in wiping out

politically and physically the opposition led by Trotsky is a matter of fulsome congratulation. As Stalin himself described it—"the defence of Leninism".

Stalin's "tragedy"

Not surprisingly, it only remains for Volkogonov to give an extra lick and polish to the Stalin concoction of lies and slanders about Trotsky himself, and adding a few for good measure. Without providing a shred of evidence, he states that all of Trotsky's actions after the death of Lenin were motivated by no more than a desire to "seize" the Party leadership. In point of fact Trotsky joined an already-existing Left Opposition, and given his political record and proven ability as leader of the Petrograd Soviet and Red Army, he was one of a number of natural candidates for the leadership of the Party. But the inference behind Volkogonov's assertion immediately becomes clear when he later states:

After his expulsion from the Soviet Union Trotsky retained one lasting and maniacal obsession to the end of his life, hatred for Stalin... his true self shone through even more... he was fighting not for the truth but for himself, the would-be dictator.

So, there we have it! The replay of Stalin's oldest and most obscene slander, in view of what is now common knowledge about the man who was dictator. But Volkogonov is determined to excel even his mentor in slander against Trotsky. Stalin's "tragedy", he tells us, was that after overcoming Trotsky in the battle for the leadership, he (Stalin) assumed precisely the command-bureaucracy style, violence and toughness advocated by Trotsky. (p.19)

It was Trotsky, after all, therefore, who had given birth to the monster of Stalinism! Finally, Volkogonov concludes:

Today there is every reason to say that if Trotsky had taken up the leadership of the Party, it would have gone through even more severe trials, and the gains made by socialism would probably have been lost... all the more so because Trotsky had no clear-cut scientific programme for building socialism in the USSR (p.21)

Cynical depths

The cynical depths of the mind of those steeped in the life of the privileged Stalinist bureaucracy could hardly be clearer. Never mind the actual evidence of Stalin's crimes; never mind that what Volkogonov lauds as Stalin's successful policy of industrialization was at the price of millions of lives; never mind that the criminal alliance with Hitler which left the USSR militarily and politically defenceless was to cost it 20 million dead in the war; never mind that his alliance with the democratic imperialists at the end of the war was aimed precisely at preventing workers' revolution throughout Europe.

Never mind all this. Trotsky might have been worse—the Soviet masses ought to be grateful to Stalin. The Stalin School of Falsification is alive and well in the USSR today—and in Gardiner Place. ■

IRISH REPUBLICANISM was alone, this January, in celebrating the memory of the Constituent Assembly of 70 years ago, the "First Dáil". Little wonder that the Irish national bourgeoisie preferred to ignore the revolutionary origins of its own state power!

Sinn Féin deputies, having swept the 1918 Elections in all but the North-East of Ireland, refused to take their seats in London and convened an Irish parliament in defiance of British imperialism on 21st January 1919. The subsequent guerrilla war of independence took the form of defence of that Dáil.

But today's Sinn Féin was not simply indulging another historic memory. Gerry Adams was preparing to resurrect the "Democratic Programme" of that Dáil as the basis for his new "all-Ireland anti-imperialist mass movement". It is immediately relevant to to-day's struggles, therefore, to examine the content of that Programme and the claims made for it.

Riding out the proletarian storm

Trade union membership in Ireland peaked in 1918 at 250,000, far above the levels of its militant surge in 1913. The economic wartime boom emboldened workers in their wage struggles. The collapse of the imperialist war brought national and proletarian revolutions in its train and emitted revolutionary impulses to the furthest reaches of the class struggle in Ireland and worldwide. In its final year the war had brought the sharpest threat of conscription to Ireland, where already 200,000 had volunteered for the slaughter. The mass spontaneous resistance to this threat breathed new confidence into the Irish Trades Union Congress & Labour Party. It led out a general strike of the entire nationalist population. The year following was to witness major strike battles and the most radical proletarian actions ever carried out in Ireland. This background is crucial in understanding the radical tone of the "Democratic Programme". It had to serve the aspiring new rulers of an independent Ireland in deceiving the working class movement and controlling it.

In the aftermath of 1916, not only had the workers been robbed of their sole revolutionary leader, James Connolly, and left at the mercy of a growing bureaucracy in the ITGWU, but the labour movement had been massively demoralized. Connolly had not advanced any concrete revolutionary action programme for the Labour Party, and his reformist successors did little to build it even organisationally. The pressure of the masses, however, forced the Labour Executive, in October 1918, to put forward a manifesto for contesting the General Elections as a pledge-bound party—calling for Irish self-determination and for socialism. Of course Labour did not mean by this to overthrow capitalism, despite all their rhetoric about the example of Russia! They immediately sac-

rificed even their own electoral independence as a party of the working class, for they yielded instantly to the demand of Sinn Féin that Labour withdraw from the contest.

The victorious Sinn Féin, clearly then a radical petit-bourgeois party, depended entirely upon the support of the toiling masses, especially the working class. In order to confront British rule their overriding need was to smash the traditional political monopoly in Ireland of the nationalist bourgeoisie. This they did triumphantly by virtually wiping out the Irish Nationalist Party which had held the majority of Irish seats in Westminster for 50 years.

Ultimately the major sections of the Irish capitalists had to fall in behind the Sinn Féin movement in order to capture it and re-fashion its own parties from it. The Sinn Féin, therefore, which con-

of the day. For example, to relate to the mass strikes then in motion throughout these islands it would have to have called for the 44-hour week and a definite minimum wage; or to relate to the oppression of landless labourers and small farmers it should have explicitly called for expropriation and division of the landlord estates under the control of the toilers. It was precisely because Sinn Féin wanted no involvement whatever with real attacks on the power of property that the Democratic Programme was so rich in rhetoric about the welfare of the people and so utterly empty of any real content.

To begin with, the "socialist" rhetoric in Johnson's draft was first removed from the text by Sinn Féin before publishing it. Much attention has been focused on one clause which was removed from Johnson's original draft: *The Republic will aim at the*

socialist aspirations of the working class with deceitful rhetoric! In the absence of fighting concrete goals, clearly stated, Johnson's "socialist" rhetoric was just that—a deception, as the man's whole political life subsequently proved. But the main point is that even as rhetoric it was too extreme for Sinn Féin! They removed it from the Democratic Programme!

It is worth examining Engels' 1883 statement referred to:

[the class struggle] has now reached a stage where the exploited and oppressed class (the proletariat) can no longer emancipate itself from the class which exploits and oppresses it (the bourgeoisie), without at the same time forever freeing the whole of society from exploitation, oppression and class struggles—this basic thought belongs solely and exclusively to Karl Marx.

"clearly based on socialist principles". Firstly it supposedly took away "the legal basis of capitalist ownership" because it stated:

The Nation's sovereignty extends not only to all its material possessions, the Nation's soil and all its resources, all the wealth and all the wealth-producing processes within the Nation and with him [Pearse] we reaffirm that all right to private property must be subordinated to the public right and welfare.

These are not socialist principles! They are the purest distillation of bourgeois nationalism. The "Nation-state" arose only in recent centuries as a historical instrument for protecting and developing the collective interests of the bourgeoisie in accumulating its capital—organising and protecting the domestic market, unifying and centralising society etc. The bourgeois monopoly of physical force over

of... capitalism! At the same time we should not underestimate just how far sections of the bourgeoisie and their petit-bourgeois agents can be compelled to go with left rhetoric. The *Communist Manifesto* savagely exposes the deceit of "Conservative or Bourgeois Socialism" which:

attains adequate expression, when, and only when, it becomes a mere figure of speech ... It is summed up in the phrase: the bourgeois is a bourgeois—for the benefit of the working class.

A "programme" to remove the legal basis for private property in the means of production would have to explicitly nationalize such property without compensation. But such a programme could only ever be put forward by a revolutionary party of the working class actively struggling to take control of all power and all means of production out of the hands of the bosses!

The *Irish Times* in 1919 expressed the fear that the First Dáil would pave the way for the application in Ireland of the "principles of Lenin and Trotsky". But this had little to do with the Democratic Programme of the Constituent Assembly which it dismissed as a "theatrical protest". It reflected their fear of what action these events might encourage among the masses. But the *Irish Times* need not have feared that the Dáil would actively encourage class struggle! All through 1919 when workers struck against the bosses and even seized their factories the revolutionary democrats of the First Dáil gave them no support. Even when Markievicz in April, before the British suppressed the assembly, introduced a motion for "a fair and full redistribution of the vacant lands and ranches of Ireland" Sinn Féin had this timid intrusion on property rights withdrawn! Indeed, the IRA was later to suppress land seizures!

The other evidence of "socialism" in the Democratic Programme is laughable. We are told by *An Phoblacht*:

the programme goes on to promise the distribution of wealth on socialist lines. It declares "the right of every citizen to an adequate share of the produce of the Nation's labour."

But such shibboleths, repeated down the years by every populist representative of Irish capitalism in every election and every budget speech mean precisely nothing. Sinn Féin's trading in such shibboleths was well illustrated when Anne Speed, the SF Euro candidate in Dublin, describe this hollow phrase as "in line with the international socialist slogan of from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs!" (APRN 26 Jan, p.10).

Socialist Planning?

Neither is there any meaning in *An Phoblacht's* claim that the document "also commits the new state to socialist planning measures". There is as much socialism in a Fianna Fáil election programme as in the First Dáil's pledge to develop "the nation's resources ... in the interests and for the benefit of the Irish people" and

>>> page 5

THE SHAM SOCIALISM OF THE DEMOCRATIC PROGRAMME

Platform at SF commemoration of the 1919 Dáil. Eoin O'Murchu, CP leader, eulogising the Democratic Programme, Anne Speed, SF Euro candidate for Dublin, Ann Crilly, nationalist film producer, "Time To Go" leader John McDonnell who promised a mass movement in Britain for withdrawal from Ireland and Jim Gibney appearing for Gerry Adams, promised a new mass anti-imperialist movement on the principles of the Democratic Programme.



PHOTO BY DEREK SPEIRS/REPORT

vened the first Dáil was the beginning of a mass Popular Front in which the interests of the working class were decisively subordinated. It would inevitably result in merely the restructuring capitalist rule in Ireland. Petit-bourgeois forces, for all their utopian idealism, can never construct a new kind of society corresponding to the imagined interests of their own class. No modern state can exist which is not either based upon capitalist property or else in which the capitalists are expropriated!

Censoring the Programme

It was, therefore, the Labour leader Thomas Johnson who was asked by Sinn Féin to draft the so-called "Democratic Programme" of the First Dáil—to do service as a statement of its "social" objectives. Of course it was not a programme in any concrete sense, merely a rhetorical statement of aspirations. A programme would have had concrete objectives for the burning issues

elimination of the class in Society which lives upon the wealth produced by the workers of the nation but gives no useful social service in return, and in the process of accomplishment will bring freedom to all who have hitherto been caught in the toils of economic servitude. (Cited in Liam Mellows by Desmond Greaves, p.170)

This excision is reprinted by *An Phoblacht* (APRN 19 Jan '89 p.7) as if to suggest that the document was all the more radical for having ever had such a piece in it. These deleted sentences "echoed the Communist Manifesto", we are told! This dubious claim is based upon Greaves' suggestion that it was a "loose paraphrase of the argument of the *Communist Manifesto*", and Greaves refers us in this connection to Engels' preface to the German edition of 1883 where a remote similarity of language can be found.

Loose paraphrases of revolutionary aims are not unknown to reformist labourites when they want to choke the

Engels' whole meaning is that overt revolutionary class struggle by the organized working class will make it the leader of society as a whole in resolving all questions of oppression and class antagonism. Labour Leader Johnson's phrasemongering echoed nothing of the sort. He was only too happy to run away from fighting for working class leadership even in the immediate democratic struggle for self-determination. He spent the next decade beheading the class struggle by helping to re-construct the brutal state apparatus of the Irish capitalist exploiter class—a thing they couldn't have done without his cowardly collaboration.

The Platitudes of the Programme

The Democratic Programme made no mention of Labour, of capital, of classes or of socialism. In no sense was it "avowedly socialist" (as claimed in APRN 25 Jan p.13). *An Phoblacht* argues four basic reasons why it was

the masses is always cloaked in the camouflage of "democratic rights" and always in terms of the individual's interests being subordinate to the common good. Such phrases are still standard legal formulae in many capitalist states where bourgeois nationalism has long ago lost any claim to a radical progressive mission.

The 1919 statement of subordination of "all right to private property" is a strong and radical phraseology typical of bourgeois programmes in radical conditions, but as long as private property is only subordinated to vague shibboleths such as the "public right and welfare" there is no contradiction for the capitalists. As long as capitalism rules, the bourgeoisie is the arbiter of what is the public welfare. Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and the captains of industry have no difficulty at this very moment of mass unemployment of proclaiming that job-creation (the public welfare) can only be achieved by improving the mechanisms

MRCI: HOW has the economic situation developed over the last three months and how is it affecting the working class?

PO: During our "black September" the government implemented one of the most vicious packages of economic measures ever. Over a few days medicine prices increased four to eight times and bread three times. Gasoline and transport prices also soared. All the basic products rose in prices—not only in terms of Peruvian currency, but also in pounds and dollars too. In one month inflation was nearly 120%. Yet the government's measures failed to resolve the crisis. In November another package followed, but still inflation kept going up. Every time the government devalued the currency the dollar price on the black market would rise to three or four times the official rate. By December the highest Peruvian banknote was worth less than £1!

In both packages the government ordered rises in pay—but the rises were considerably below the level of inflation. Hyper-inflation was being used to steal workers' wages—that is, make them bear the whole cost of the crisis, the debt burden etc. But the working class did not stand by and let their livelihoods be savaged. An attempt to decree the annulment of wage indexation agreements led to a massive strike by bank and textile workers and the government was forced to retreat.

The hyper-inflation marks the beginning of a very serious recession. It has reduced the home market dramatically. One example of this is the 90% drop in beer sales. Workers simply cannot afford beer anymore. Companies have nothing to sell and demand has slumped. In turn this has occasioned the reduction of overtime. With low wages workers were having to do 14 hour shifts to make ends meet. Now this option has been effectively closed. Even more direct attacks came under the PROAM system, the system that legitimises the expulsion of temporary workers. Whole factories were closed and entire workforces sacked.

The crisis did not only affect the workers. In Peru many small merchants and street-sellers exist. They have been ruined. Their working capital has been simply wiped out. On the land the situation for the peasants is terrible. First, the market for farm produce collapsed. Second, a government increase in bank interest rates of more than 1000% per year has choked off the credit peasants needed to survive and to continue to work the land.

MRCI: Why has the government been forced to resort to these measures?

PO: We are seeing the bankruptcy of a bourgeois nationalist solution to Peru's problems. Garcia's government is

MRCI Interview

Peru in Turmoil

Peru is now facing major political and economic crisis, causing a rift in Garcia's bourgeois APRA government. It faces opposition from the right by the anti-APRA bourgeois block, the Frente Democratico (FREDEMO), from working class militancy in the shape of the popular frontist United Left (IU), and in the countryside from the Maoist guerrilla organisation, Sendero Luminoso. Here the MRCI interviews a member of Poder Obrero, our fraternal organisation, about the developing crisis.

caught in the contradiction of attempting to sponsor the development of a national bourgeoisie while at the same time remaining tied to imperialism. So, despite his populist rhetoric, Garcia has not taken any decisive action against the crippling foreign debt. Therefore he is obliged to try and save the situation by attacking the workers, the poor peasants and the small merchants.

MRCI: What is the situation with regards to the working class and its organisations? How have they responded to the attacks?

PO: In Peru there are four union federations. The most important is the Confederación General de Trabajadores de Peru (CGTP), led by the Stalinist Communist Party. In November 1987 the CGTP, together with the peasants, teachers, students and regional and shanty town organisations formed the National Popular Assembly (ANP) as an anti-imperialist organisation. But in the face of the latest attacks the bureaucrats who control the ANP prevented the workers' anger from being turned into effective action.

After the government's September package riots, strikes and peasant land seizures broke out spontaneously. Only after five weeks—during which there had been a major offensive by the right and the demoralisation of many workers who had struck—did the CGTP/ANP leaders act, and then they only called a one day general strike. There were no mass demonstrations called for this day. And in the face of an occupation of Lima by special heavily armed riot troops and tanks—the city was virtually under a state of siege on the day of the strike—the leaders retreated.

When the second package was announced the miners were in the middle of a national strike. They joined with textile, social security, bank and naval weapon factory workers in protest. They were met by a decree banning all actions on the streets and the threat that they would be gassed and fired on if they defied the ban. Despite this there were many examples of



▲ Peruvian Miners

defiance. The miners attacked the police and smashed the windows of the Ministry of Labour.

It was at this point that the first national plenum of the ANP was convoked, and on its agenda was the question of organising an indefinite general strike. This was the demand being placed on it by many workers. Faced with these calls the Stalinists of the CGTP and the leaders of the United Left got the ANP plenum postponed until February of this year—when they hoped the anger would have died down.

And they cynically called another one day general strike without naming a date. Only two days before it was supposed to take place did a closed executive meeting actually officially call it, adding that there should be no action on the streets. This was a Stalinist betrayal of a working class mobilisation that was clearly heading towards a real general strike against Garcia's attacks. The end result was that the miners and textile workers were left isolated as they continued their struggle.

MRCI: How has the crisis affected Garcia's own party, the APRA? And what are the right wing opposition to him in FREDEMO doing?

PO: In December the first congress of the APRA to take place since Garcia's government came to power was con-

vened. The right wing of APRA were very critical of Garcia. When he came to the platform the loudest whistling he had ever faced was heard. He was forced to resign as president of the party.

The militants in the party raised the demand of "All power to the APRA", and demanded a government accountable to the party, instead of an unaccountable presidency. But the whole point is that Garcia's policies are, in reality, shaped by this bourgeois nationalist party.

APRA is now massively divided. Some factions sympathise with leftist guerrillaism, some organise right wing death squads. In general the drift is towards a party based government with more concessions to imperialism

and more attacks on the working class and the guerrillaists.

The right wing parties, led by the novelist Vargas Llosa, have made many advances. Vargas Llosa is an "economic liberal". He blames all of Peru's problems on "the state" and urges the transformation of Peru into a nation of small businessmen. He is a spitting image of Thatcher, but is meeting opposition from the Social Christians and Belaunde's Accion Popular (AP) who have in the past used the state to intervene in the Peruvian economy. Nevertheless, these forces are united, together with big business organised in the CONFIEP (Peruvian Employers' Federation), to smash the strikes of the workers and stabilise Peru's economy at a massive cost to the working class. They would prefer to do this under the auspices of a right wing government. But there are sections of the bourgeoisie that sympathise with the idea of bringing in a Peruvian Pinochet to restore order. They have allies amongst sections of the army who see a coup d'etat as the answer to the crisis.

MRCI: How have the parties of the left squared up to the developing crisis?

PO: The IU has its first congress this year. It is divided into three wings. The leader of the IU, and ex-mayor of Lima, Alfonso Barrantes, is in a bloc with the bourgeois party, the PSR, and is backed

by the petit bourgeois elements of the IU. This bloc is organising the moderate "Convergencia Socialista". Its objective is a popular front, in the shape of a government of national unity with the APRA, FREDEMO and CONFIEP. Its goals would be to smash the guerrillas and rescue the capitalist economy from chaos. The Barrantes group is openly opposed to the indexation of wages. It was complicit, through its silence, in the massacre of 300 Sendero Luminoso prisoners in 1986.

The centre in the IU is led by the pro-Moscow Communist Party. They favour a left version of the popular front but refuse to break with Barrantes. Like their Stalinist counterparts in Chile they have learnt nothing from the tragedy of Allende's popular front—a tragedy for the working class whose interests were subordinated to those of the bourgeois parties and whose lives paid for the inevitable failure of the Popular Unity government.

The other main wing of the IU is the PUM, a centrist organisation which has split. One faction, Tapia's group, supports Barrantes. The PUM majority, on the other hand, are verbally very radical, but they combine anti-Barrantes rhetoric with a policy of fostering illusions in a coalition government which would take no measures against the national bourgeoisie.

MRCI: Sendero Luminoso are outside the IU but do not offer a revolutionary alternative to it. How would you characterise them?

PO: They are a Maoist-Stalinist party that believe Deng and Hoxha have started to restore capitalism in China and Albania! They believe that their "popular war" in Peru is the key to resurrecting a Maoist International. In fact, despite their militarism—which is of a thoroughly petit bourgeois guerrillaist variety—they are for a new democracy which would involve a coalition with the "national bourgeoisie". To achieve this, they want to surround the city from the countryside. Their methods, which include killing leftists and workers as well as bosses and officials, are counterposed to the real mass struggles taking place in Peru. They are thoroughly anti-working class.

The real alternative to the IU's popular front strategy is put forward by Poder Obrero. We base ourselves on the direct action of the masses and fight to develop it—through the use of transitional demands against inflation, unemployment, the foreign debt etc—towards permanent revolution and the establishment of a revolutionary workers' and peasants' government in Peru. In the period ahead the fight for the general strike and for the transformation of the ANP from its present bureaucratic form into a genuine workers' and peasants' organising centre, an alternative power centre, are our key tasks. ■

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MILITANT MUST BE DEFENDED!

THE EXPULSION of *Militant* supporters from the Labour Party and the suppression of their paper within the party is certain at next month's conference unless an open fight is urgently mounted throughout the working class. IWG has repeatedly proposed such a fight but *Militant* has stupidly preferred to limit themselves to protest within the official party structures, appealing only for money and for people to join Labour.

The result can only be a major blow for workers' democracy in the whole labour and trade union movement. Unlike *Militant* we do not believe that Labour can be a force for socialism but we absolutely defend the right of every socialist politi-

cal tendency to organize and openly argue its views within the Party and the unions. Spring will be enormously strengthened by decimating the ranks of the left of the Party. He will have good reason to gloat over the stupidity of Emmet Stagg's sectarian *Labour Left* tendency which has refused to defend *Militant*.

Socialists and trade union activists, no matter how much they disagree with *Militant's* politics, must immediately move resolutions mandating their union delegates to the Party conference to reject all attacks on *Militant*.

Members of *Labour Left* and of the Party's youth organization who claim to have any shred of socialist principle must openly demand the withdrawal of the *Labour Left* motion to Conference which argues for a witch-hunt enquiry into *Militant*.

Defend *Militant* openly and unite against the expulsion motion supported by Spring! Force the Union delegations to oppose Spring's attack on workers' democracy! ■



Services, Industrial, Professional & Technical Union

▲ PHOTO: DEREK SPEIRS/REPORT

SHOULD WORKERS welcome the merger of the two biggest general unions? The rift which they have perpetuated since Larkin created the WUI in opposition to his own ITGWU in 1924 has been an unqualified disaster for the fighting ability of our class. So, with their re-unification apparently imminent there should be no need even to ask the question... except that everything revealed so far about the proposed new "SIPTU" should set alarm bells ringing among the rank and file.

The proposed new "Services, Industrial, Professional, Technical Union" of 210,000 members deliberately symbolizes, even in its name, a break with any class-conscious tradition of militancy among the membership. The defence made in the ITGWU by John Carroll to his 150 staff in the week before its announcement was that the name reflected the "new working people" in society, in "financial services, sales and marketing and in high technology".

The reality of the working class, however, bears little relation to this cynical fictional image designed to "market" his own "services" among new salaried white-collar sections. The overwhelming majority of wage earners continue to work in factories, construction and commercial semi-state services—power, turf, transport, communications—, in civil and public services etc. Low-paid and often insecure employment in local authorities, health services, retail, cleaning, hairdressing, catering etc. accounts for a vastly bigger army of exploited wage labourers than the entire body of "new working people" whose interests would apparently dominate SIPTU. And that is to say nothing of the vast army of unemployed, who have no reason to thank Attley and Carroll for their "services" over the past 16 years of rocketing job sell-outs.

A major trade union merger such as this can only

be understood as a part of the whole strategy of the trade union bureaucracy. During the great surge of wage militancy in the 1960s such a merger was actively discussed as a means of imposing greater control on the rank and file. However, the bosses could not wait that long. Under threat of a savage Industrial Relations law in 1970, the union leaders collaborated in imposing national wage agreements between 1971 and 1985, destroying much of the shop-floor militancy of the rank and file. Thus the prospect of major union mergers receded into the shadows until the latest period of crisis.

The defeats inflicted on trade unionists—in jobs, wages and public spending cuts—meant a major loss of membership and financial difficulty for the bureaucrats who had helped bring them about. The SIPTU is at one level an attempt to rationalize these difficulties by pooling resources. But it is much more. It offers Attley and Carroll & Co. a major opportunity to transform the whole nature of trade unionism in Ireland—in a disastrous direction. The scale of the attacks on all the gains of the past 30 years—in health, education, local authorities, public employment—has forced them into a more open acceptance of the full logic of the capitalist market—the "new realism" which sweeps aside any idea of organized resistance by workers to the "necessary" restructuring of capitalism for its own sur-

vival. They are thus determined to eradicate the traditions of militant action and any concept of class struggle from the major unions.

The clear message from the architects of the SIPTU is that it will put a new emphasis on financial services, insurance etc. to its members. But that alone would not be enough to grind down the will of organized workers to fight for their conditions. Hence, instead of the merger uniting an already divided work-force at shop-floor and industry level, the whole union movement is to be regionalized and effective power concentrated in the hands of 8 carefully selected regional 'potentates', each with the power to veto industrial action.

Workers Party "Realism"

With utter contempt for any semblance of democracy, all the top posts in the merged union have been farmed out among the existing bosses of the FWUI and ITGWU up to 1994 when, we are told, Attley will become General Secretary "until his retirement" in 1998. Workers Party bureaucrats Rabbitt, Geraghty etc. appear to be elbowed aside in favour of loyal Labour bureaucrats! But that is not because the Workers Party is any less committed to the new brand of trade unionism planned for SIPTU! Their latest journal carried not one but two articles advocating a retreat

from militancy. ITGWU bureaucrat Eamonn Gilmore tells us:

The people accept that there will be no socialist transformation and that the more punishment we take now, the sooner this little capitalist economy will be back on its feet again, and the emigrant sons and daughters can return to some modest prosperity. (Making Sense, Jan '89 p.8)

While Rosheen Callender, despite a lengthy exposé of the poverty, low wages and insecurity afflicting half of the Irish working class, nevertheless concludes:

Wage militancy may have its place in the trade union armoury—but it's a smaller and smaller place, I believe, because wages are no longer, always, the central issue in every employment or at every stage of either the organization's or the individual workers' life. (p.15)

Indeed, workers must fight on many other issues, but no-one who understands anything of capitalist class society, no-one who takes seriously the cause of the low-paid masses, can possibly write off the vital importance of wage-militancy as the bedrock of the organized working class movement in this way!

Rank and File Democracy

In the months ahead, ITGWU and FWUI members will be confronted with a ballot to ratify the proposals for the new SIPTU. A new

rule book, detailed structures and the allocation of the highest-paid positions, will all have been worked out in advance. Militants must fight to have all of these details subject to scrutiny and amendment. Any ultimatum to accept or reject the whole package must be fought tooth and nail. The sentiment for unity is very powerful and the members will be easily blackmailed into accepting a pig in a poke if the only choice presented is a cynical take-it-or-leave-it.

● Fight for democratic workplace meetings to debate the content of the merger and to hammer out proposals for the kind of unity, which can strengthen rather than undermine our fighting ability in work-places, across industries or sectors, nationally, and with real international links

● Fight for a union based on the principle of class struggle against capitalism, a union that puts strike action at the centre of its armoury.

● Fight for a union in which the sovereign voice is that of the rank and file expressed through work-place branches and genuinely democratic industrial sections and conferences based upon delegates directly elected by and accountable to the rank and file.

As a cosmetic gesture, the ITGWU has agreed to adopt in SIPTU the FWUI practice of not allowing full-time officials to be conference delegates. But anyone

with experience of the FWUI knows that its officials still control the conference delegates. All delegates and mandates come from "branches" which are also controlled by the officials! So divorced are the branches from the work-place members that an AGM of 200 out of 2,000 members would be a rare achievement! The rank and file meeting in the work-place have no formal power whatever within the union!

● Fight for the election and recallability of all full-time officials, paying them no more than the average wage! Full-time positions should be filled by election from among the most combative members and their jobs kept open for them for after their stint.

● Turn the new union out to organize the unemployed—not to patronize them with donations for tiny job-creation schemes as does the FWUI!

● Turn the new union out to mobilize alongside community groups, students, housewives, youth and all the oppressed in class-wide struggles against the cuts!

● Fight for the right of all work-place groups, sections and branches to freely affiliate to labour-movement campaigns and for delegates to trades councils to be elected by and accountable to the rank and file.

● Fight for a national rank and file movement throughout all the trade unions against the capitalist offensive! ■